

Intangible Cultural Heritage Update

News and updates on Newfoundland and Labrador's Intangible Cultural Heritage Program

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In this issue

Page 1	ICH Review
Page 2	Capture the Cape
Page 3	Pouch Cove Youth Project
Page 4	Dancing in Quidi Vidi
Page 4	Gander River Boat

A Review of ICH in Newfoundland & Labrador

By Dr. Gerald Pocius, Chair, Provincial ICH Advisory Committee

In 2002, I represented Canada at a meeting of experts in Rio de Janeiro working on an early draft of UNESCO's Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage. Twenty specialists from around the world debated a number of key issues that the Convention hoped to address.

I returned to Newfoundland that January inspired and enthusiastic, convinced that UNESCO's work in this field was of immense importance to our province and our culture.

I was optimistic that the Government of Canada would support UNESCO's work, and soon I became involved in ICH policy discussions in Ottawa, working with the Department of Canadian Heritage.

I was naturally disappointed when the Canadian government decided not to sign on to the final version of the Convention that was ratified in 2003. However, a number of us had begun work here in our province on ICH, believing that we could pursue many of the UNESCO policies here even though our federal government was not a signatory of the Convention.

In 2002, I had spoken at the Association of Heritage Industries meeting, outlining how ICH was an important new direction for heritage work in Newfoundland and Labrador. Anita Best and others had worked tirelessly to include ICH as one of the key initiatives in the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Cultural Blueprint (2006). Brent Meade and Jerry Dick worked within our Government to support a province-wide forum of ICH that we held later in 2006.

From that meeting, we created our provincial ICH Strategic Plan—probably the first province in Canada to have a plan devoted exclusively to ICH. That plan eventually led to the creation of an ICH Development Officer for the province, which Dale Jarvis started in April 2008.



So in these past two years—with the challenge of limited resources—we have accomplished much. We have created a website devoted to our ICH activities, and are continually adding new material. We have started an inventory of provincial traditions, with all materials housed in Memorial University's Digital Archive Initiative, accessible throughout the province (and the world) through our website.

With support from the province and Memorial University, we offer support for community groups to preserve their ICH online through this inventory initiative. Our ICH Provincial Advisory Group (which I chair) has three specialized committees that are working on a number of initiatives.

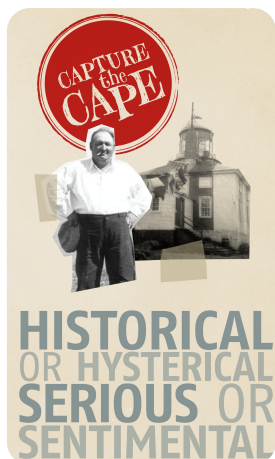
The Training Committee has sponsored a series of workshops across the province for heritage workers to learn the skills required to document ICH.

Our Inventory Committee continues to work with grassroots organizations to develop ways to foster a "grassroots" (i.e., bottom-up) inventory of the province, shaped by the priorities of communities.

Our Celebration Committee is working on a province-wide system to spotlight ordinary tradition-bearers and their knowledge.

Besides the work of these committees, we are pursuing specific initiatives. We have, for example, sponsored the province's first annual folklife festival (this year on mummers). In these past two years, then, since we began to implement our ICH Strategic Plan, we have seen great progress.

We continue to learn from other countries, as we endeavour to put our ICH policy into practice. With limited means, we continue to engage in activities that encourage the sustainability of the province's living traditions. With this work, we are truly a leader in Canada in implementing the noble goals of UNESCO's ICH work.



Help Capture The Cape!

In 1843, the Bonavista Lighthouse was constructed to steer boats away from the Cape's dangerous coastline. Today, Cape Bonavista is one of the most visited (and photographed) sites in our province. A new exhibit is being developed that explores the lure of Cape Bonavista. Send us a story, song, poem, picture, or video that describes your connection to Cape Bonavista. Serious or sentimental, historical or hysterical, we want them all: your Pop's dramatic tale of a night spent in waters off the Cape; a copy of your sister's wedding pics taken in gale force winds; the mixed tape you played for your girlfriend while parked at the Cape... No story is too small or insignificant. Your submission might be selected for the new permanent exhibit at the Cape Bonavista Interpretation Centre!

Download the official submission form (<http://www.capturethecapebonavista.com/>) You can send your submissions via email or post. You could win a \$500 gift certificate for camera supplies!

Deadline for submissions: May 31st 2010

Oral History Project at Cape St. Francis School

Over the past four months Grade Four students at Cape St. Francis Elementary School in Pouch Cove have been involved in an interesting history project. Supported by their teachers and members of the Pouch Cove Heritage Committee, thirty students have developed a list of 60 possible interview questions and identified relatives that they wished to interview.

After some initial training in interview and recording techniques each student selected a short list of twelve questions to ask in their interviews. The resulting interviews, recorded in a range of media and supported by permission slips for future use signed by the interview subjects, are now ready for archiving and transcription.



The Grade Four students who participated in this project as volunteers have derived a new sense of respect for their elders from this work. The idea of involving elementary students as participants and as "scouts" to identify subjects for later in-depth oral history, was originally proposed by Dan Rubin, Chair of the Committee.

As a retired teacher and school principal he had previously led other heritage projects in rural communities and was convinced that involving the students would connect them with the past and inspire their interest in knowing the stories of their community. But he admits he is stunned by the results.

"We had no idea that their work would be so careful and thorough," says Mr. Rubin. "We invited two of the students, Hailey Crocker and Nathan Moores, to our town council to share the stories they had written, based

on interviewing their grandparents. Hailey's grandmother and Nathan's grandfather were there for the presentation, and they were just beaming. It was a wonderful moment, and certainly affirmed the value of involving children in the oral history process."

Still ahead is the analysis and consolidation of the recorded interviews into a standard archival format. The newly incorporated Pouch Cove Heritage Committee will be identifying other local projects and making decisions about archival processes when they meet with facilitators to set detailed goals for their group during a Strategic Planning Workshop in June.



Top photo: This photo shows Grade Four students Hailey Crocker and Nathan Moores along with Pouch Cove mayor Sarah Patten, who has presented them with gifts from the Pouch Cove Town Council, to thank them for their excellent presentations about the lives of their grandparents, who were also present in the council chambers for this event.

Bottom photo: A high flake at Pouch Cove circa 1930s PANL B3-226 (Credit: PANL-CMCS).

Traditional Newfoundland Dancing in Quidi Vidi

This past winter, a group of people passionate about traditional Newfoundland dancing have been meeting at the Quidi Vidi Brewing Co. on Barrows Road in Quidi Vidi Village, St. John's, to keep the old dances alive.

The group now plans a Spring Dance Series starting Tuesday May 11.

"This Spring Dance Series is an opportunity to 'dig in' a bit more deeply to traditional set dancing," says Christine Draper, one of the organizers. "With a group of people who come every week, we'll be able to build on skills and knowledge and spend more time dancing!"

Jane Rutherford and Ford Elms will be teaching and calling the dances. Both Ford and Jane have many years experience as traditional dancers and callers and between them have a large repertoire of traditional dances they know. Stan Pickett will play accordion for the dances.

Dancers are required to register and pay in advance for the series of six weekly dances, starting Tuesday evening May 11. For information on how to register contact Jane (janerutherford@gmail.com) or Ford (fordelms@yahoo.ca).



Gander River Boat Restoration

The Wooden Boat Museum of Newfoundland and Labrador has a fun new mission, and is inviting the public to take part. In 2009, Greg Osmond of Portugal Cove donated a vintage Gander River boat to the museum. While the donation of the boat was a great addition to the museum's collection, organizers quickly realized the boat needed some serious work.



"The boat needs restoration to bring it back to its original condition," explains Beverly King, project administrator for the museum, "to give back what it has lost, and to put it back in its place as a traditional NL Wooden Boat."

The museum is inviting interested boat enthusiasts to join them for a week of work and learning as they take the boat and give it back its "health & strength" at its new home. Participants will work alongside boat builder Jerome Canning to learn the history of the Gander River Boat, and its importance in the history of our province.

"You will leave the week-long workshop with a sense of pride knowing you have helped breathe new life into an old vessel," says King, "and you will have helped the WBMNL carry out its mission to safeguard the legacy of our province's wooden boat building traditions!"

The workshop will take place at the Museum building in Winterton from Monday May 17th to Friday May 21st. Registration fee, including 5 day building workshop, lunch & snacks is \$400/person. A package including all above as well as weeklong accommodations and meals at the George House B&B or Inn By the Bay in Dildo is also available. For details on the workshop or accommodations, please call Bev King at 709-583-2070 or email bkingheritage@gmail.com.